

Suzuki-L: Selected Postings

Suzuki Piano School: Support from Contemporary Music Learning Research

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Shin'ichi Suzuki (1898-1998), Japanese music educator, believed that musical talent is not an inborn gift, but an ability that anyone can develop with the "right education." Suzuki was not a scientist or a researcher, and did not support his ideas with organized studies. However, contemporary research on music learning supports his teaching philosophy and methodology.

The attached Bibliography is from a 1998 Master's Thesis reporting on music learning research organized to prove that the Suzuki method is pedagogically sound. The basis of the discussion is Suzuki's own list of the conditions necessary for ability development: "1) the earlier period; 2) better environment; 3) the better teaching method; 4) more training; and 5) a superior instructor" (Talent Education for Young Children, 1969, 20). In addition to reporting on the research, the thesis also includes a discussion of my own field work, which consists of an interview survey carried out to enhance the knowledge gained from research.

The Bibliography includes books, academic and scientific journals, popular press reports, newspapers, Suzuki literature, and miscellaneous items.

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to give evidence in support of the Suzuki teaching approach, with emphasis on the Suzuki Piano School. The author examines the main features of the method, as outlined by Shinichi Suzuki, and presents background information and research findings to show that it is pedagogically sound.

Methods employed include reporting on research in the field of music learning, personal observation, and interview.

Specific topics covered include talent development, the learning process, brain research, music for the very young, and the music learning sequence. The author reports on personal experience with Suzuki and traditional methods. Also included are interviews with parents and educators. Research evidence is then compared with the features of Suzuki teaching.

Based on analysis of the data obtained by the above methods, the author concludes that the teaching principles and techniques employed by Suzuki educators are pedagogically sound and supported by contemporary music learning research.

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